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A CALL TO LIBRARIANSHIP

ISSUED TO THE
EDUCATED YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN
OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON

BY

THE ALUMNI OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON LIBRARY SCHOOL

LIBRARY
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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Published by
The University of Washington Library
School Alumni Association
1919

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Prefatory Note

What do you intend to do when you have finished college? Are you going to work? Have you thought seriously about what kind of work you would like to do? And for what kind of work you are best fitted? Have you ever thought about Library Work?

The American Library Association has recently issued circulars pointing out the scarcity of well prepared librarians, and urging educated young people to prepare themselves for library service.

To aid the A. L. A. in its effort, and to tell you something about the work, and invite those interested in it to join the ranks of library workers, this pamphlet is issued by the Alumni Association of the University of Washington Library School.

For valuable suggestions and criticisms received, the Alumni Association wishes to acknowledge its indebtedness to the following: Mr. W. E. Henry, Mr. C. W. Smith, Mr. J. T. Jennings, Mr. E. E. Ruby, and Miss Mildred Pope.

Need For Trained Librarians

Booker T. Washington once said to his race: "When you can do any piece of work as well or better than anyone else, no one will inquire as to your color." We might vary the expression, and, to some degree the thought, of this important truth, and say that if you can do library work as well or better than anyone else, the library world will inquire only for your post office address. One librarian, who had been engaged in the administrative side of library service for more than twenty years, stated that he had never known a competent librarian in enforced idleness, or, less nicely stated, "out of a job."

There has been from the early days of library training a strong demand for well trained people; that demand has increased rapidly in recent years; and within the last two years the growth of this demand has been phenomenal. Salaries have increased as rapidly as in other lines of professional service, comparing fairly well with those paid in the teaching profession, and yet it is almost impossible to secure the persons actually needed to supply library staff requirements.

This increased demand has not been essentially different from what it has been for some years past; it is only more intense. It has been intensified in part because the government, in its larger need for ready and quick service during the stress of war, found that librarians were better trained for handling record work than any other class of persons, and many of those who entered government service have not yet returned to library work.

There is a rather rapid increase in the demand for trained librarians for several reasons wholly independent of war service or war conditions. Most of the larger libraries are growing and require increase of staff; new libraries are constantly being established; and the call for trained people is coming also from many new phases of library service: for example, high school libraries; county libraries; business libraries in connection with large business houses; libraries in penal and reformatory institutions; bibliographic institutions; and even the book trade.

In addition to all these influences and tendencies toward extended library service, there is, among the general public, a rapidly growing appreciation of library service and the educational possibilities of libraries which must ultimately demand a very large addition to the present supply of librarians.

Nature of the Profession

The library is not clearly understood by many who know the superficial appearance of the institution. Many see it as an isolated non-essential institution—a luxury—a thing to be had after all essentials are obtained. In reality, the library is a great educational institution, coordinate with the school. It is a continuation school that the individual and the community may use after the elements of education, that is, the devices of education are obtained from the schools. The school teaches how to read, but the library teaches what to read and makes available the best the world has furnished. The school is a teaching institution with the minimum of freedom on the part of the individual. The library, on the other hand, gives the least possible direction and affords the individual complete freedom of contact and selection, and the real education of self-determination. That power of self-direction, which is necessary in a democracy, is far more easily obtained in the library than in the school.

The education obtained through the library is the only really independent and self-determined education which is available to the masses of our people. It has been called the "University of the People," and perhaps no better characterization can be expressed in so few words. Just here comes the infinite opportunity of the well equipped librarian, for, while he does not instruct, he does, in a very important sense, become the guide and the personal adviser of many of his patrons. The largest degree of freedom and independence is offered by the library, but its patrons often need, and seek, much advice. This is the librarian's opportunity for professional service—to give with sympathy and insight the advice and direction of an expert, thus rendering a social service for which no pecuniary compensation is offered, and upon which no money value can be set.

Demands of the Profession

Out of such opportunities for professional and social service grow those demands of the profession that make both natural fitness and extended preparation necessary for the librarian. The person who neither appreciates nor comprehends people is not by nature fitted for library service. The person who is annoyed by the presence of people must not offer his service in the library. For his own happiness and for that of the patrons of the library, he must not enter. Only the one who has an instinct for service, and delights in aiding those

who seek and need help and direction should undertake the work. The person who desires to enter upon library work should also realize that physical defects are quite as serious drawbacks to the librarian as to workers in other fields. Only exceptional ability or unusual determination can overcome the handicap thus imposed.

But good intentions, kindly feelings, and a strong body, even with the instinct of service, will not in themselves suffice. The librarian is the director and adviser in an educational institution which aims to prepare our people for happy, intelligent, and helpful living, and he who is himself ignorant of the world's experience cannot help others to live in the light of, and profit by, that experience. The measure of people's need of the world's experience as a guide for their living is the measure of their use of libraries. As the trades, the arts, industry, business and the professions demand a larger outlook and better service from past experience, the more will the library be in demand, and the more extended will be the preparation demanded of the librarian. The librarian must know what the world has done, that he may help in the determination of what can, and must, be done in the present and future.

To these ends, then, the person contemplating librarianship as a profession must possess a rather comprehensive scholastic preparation. Nothing less than a college education, or its equivalent in reading, travel, and varied experience, should suffice for the librarian of the future. This does not mean, of course, that no one has done good library work with less. Many have done so, are doing so, and will continue to do so, but standards are being elevated, and the best library schools are now demanding college graduation for admission. Certainly the welfare of libraries demands that librarians shall possess a good general education. It is well, whenever possible, for the person contemplating library service to plan his education with this in view, consulting the heads of library schools, or others familiar with the demands of library work.

The special, or technical, education in preparation for library service is given by schools usually connected with a university or with a large, well equipped public library where both teaching and practice may be had under economic conditions. These schools vary somewhat as to requirements for admission, and as to length of curriculum, but all offer either a one or a two year curriculum. One year gives sufficient training for the ordinary problems and practices of most library positions, but two years are highly

desirable and to be commended to persons preparing for the larger administrative positions, or for those persons who wish to prepare for extended bibliographic service. The one-year curriculum cannot offer courses which will give good preparation for advanced lines of library activity. Good preparation for librarianship, therefore, will require either five or six years of study beyond the high school, four years in academic preparation, and one or two years of professional or technical instruction.

Opportunities For Trained Workers

One of the first questions, if not quite the first, asked by any intelligent person when considering his career in any business, trade, or profession is: "What are the opportunities in the occupation I am about to select?"

First: As to the number of positions open, librarianship offers rather unusual opportunities. So far there is no record of any well-prepared person who cannot find a position for service. There has probably been no time in the past forty years when well-trained librarians were forced to seek positions. And whatever increase may come in the number of persons trained for library service, the growing demand will certainly outstrip it.

There are at present few library schools and they are not increasing rapidly in number for various reasons. No library school can handle large classes, because library training demands that the instructor give to each student much individual attention, as all work must be carefully supervised and inspected. The lecture methods so common in purely academic studies, by which large classes can be instructed, are not satisfactory nor even possible in most technical subjects.

At this time a strong demand exists for well-trained people; in fact, the demand is so urgent that short courses are being established to prepare people to occupy positions without consideration as to whether or not they are *well* prepared. Mere numbers to fill vacancies are now in demand. All this, it must be remembered, is in the face of increasing salaries.

Our own library school and every other one, so far as is known, could place at once in good positions several competent trained persons if such persons could be had. It is now a question, not of getting good people at small salaries, but rather, of finding persons who can take the positions at any salary within reason.

So far, we have dealt merely with the question of finding a job. While that is important, it is far from being the most significant item under the general head of opportunity. The position of librarian in any community naturally places the young man or woman in a position of some distinction in the center of the intellectual life of the community, and at once affords the opportunity of intellectual leadership. The question, then, is one for individual concern, and, stated frankly, is: "Am I strong enough, and sufficiently prepared, to assume and retain the leadership opened to me?" Such leadership, however, is not the leadership of personal aggrandizement, but the leadership of service. "He that is greatest among you, let him serve," expresses the opportunity and duty of the librarian as educational director and adviser.

On the practical and worldly side, librarianship offers to educated young people an excellent opportunity to do that necessary thing —earn a living. It pays fair money compensation, it affords opportunity to work in good localities with intelligent people, in the centers of social environment in good towns and cities, and usually with good working conditions. These things are always worthy of consideration.

To the person of good education, interested in what the world is doing, and in the books growing out of what the world is doing, there are few more congenial occupations, for in no line of work, with the possible exception of Journalism, is there greater opportunity to be aware of the world than in library service.

There are, of course, many different types of work in a library, just as there are different types of work in any large business or institution.

First: There is what we may call *general* library work. This is of course, the basis, without which there can be no specialization. To those who prefer this, and are successful in it, there are open such positions as head of a branch library, head of a library in a small city, or, in fact, any position which does not call for specialized knowledge. To many persons these appeal because of the variety of the work.

Second: The position of reference librarian offers a place which is intellectually invigorating to those whose interests lie in the acquisition of information, the solution of all kinds of problems, and the knowledge of books as tools. The reference librarian should approach that ideal of "knowing something about everything, and everything about something" which makes the work a success.

Third: To be a children's librarian one should be devoted primarily to children and to their interests. This work requires wide reading among both juvenile books and those about children (for a children's librarian works with teachers as well as with children) infinite patience, a good imagination, and a never failing sense of humor. It offers great possibilities, for library work with children well done will solve, in a few years, the problems of work with the adults. Children are most appreciative, though demanding much.

Fourth: To the person who is fonder of books than of people, cataloging offers the most interesting opportunity. To the cataloger belongs the first duty of the librarian—that of making the books readily available to the readers—for without a systematic arrangement and a comprehensive catalog the library would indeed be a difficult place in which to find a desired volume. Through the cataloger's hands must pass every book that comes into the library, and upon his judgment its usefulness largely depends. Every day opens up to him an acquaintance with a new field of knowledge or renews his grasp upon an old one.

A word should also be said touching the particular need and opportunities for men in the library profession. There are several classes of library positions which offer peculiarly attractive openings. One of these is the librarianship of the research libraries of large industrial concerns. More and more these great companies are depending upon the results obtained in their own laboratories by investigators working under direct commission of the companies themselves. In almost every case the equipment of these laboratories includes a library of the technical literature peculiar to the industry. The building up and maintenance of such a library calls for a very special and technical preparation. The librarian needs not only a broad knowledge of such subjects as chemistry, physics, engineering, mining, accounting, administration, or whatever the special library calls for, but a good technical library training as well. The pay of such librarians is generally good, the tenure of the positions secure, and the opportunities offered by association with concerns of large wealth and influence are great.

Another attractive field for men is to be found in the libraries of colleges and universities. For a man of intellectual bent and catholic tastes, provided he has vigor, tact, and decision, here is a really fine opportunity. It involves constant and intimate association with educated men. The librarianship of such institutions is generally com-

ing to be looked upon as a professorship, and the librarian is accepted on equal terms with other members of the faculty in all that concerns the institution. The work in a university library gives large scope for research and investigation, so that it is an appeal to the scholarly man. Libraries of schools of technology also offer some fine openings.

On the administrative side of library work there is an insistent and growing need for men of versatility, force and resourcefulness. A large library is an educational and business institution which must be kept constantly in the public eye, and its administration and finances must command the sympathetic support of other public and business interests in the community. Not the least important function of the librarian is this articulation of his work with the interests of the public. It requires qualifications which are apt to be found in men rather than in women, and the reward in public recognition is likely to be such as will appeal to any ambitious man. There have never been enough men qualified to supply the demand in this field. The salaries paid in these positions are the largest which the profession affords.

Another question that will be asked by intelligent young people, and especially by young women is: "How will the education I am obtaining in preparing for this particular vocation serve me as a life asset, not merely for the present, and in this special field, but for intelligent life in other lines?" The young woman instinctively asks herself this question: "When I am a house-keeper and a home-maker, will this library education be of service?" This is a proper and intelligent question, for almost every right-minded young woman who enters professional or business life hopes after a few years, at most, to give it up and make a home for herself and family.

Under such conditions will the library training stand to her as a good preparation and a profitable expenditure of time and money? In answer to these questions, let it be said that that educational preparation is best for any person under any circumstances which will best enable the person to do well whatever is in hand to be done, and, at the same time, obtain the most fundamental insight into life. All that people want, or need, to know can be found in books, if one knows where to seek and how to read. Other things equal, that person who knows best how to handle books intelligently will have the largest help from the world's stock of knowledge. The young woman is safe in undertaking the home with all its perplexities and duties, if she knows how to find and utilize the sources of information. How to sew, to

knit, to furnish and decorate her home, to rear children, to feed, to clothe them, to care for them in sickness and in health—all can be found in authoritative books by one who knows how to look for them, and this with much better results than to ask the neighbors, or to remember how mother used to do. There is no other group of young women half so well equipped to select and direct the reading of children as well trained librarians.

It has been said that one does not need to know everything, but he does need to know where to find everything when it is wanted. Our college curriculum could be shortened one year if our freshmen knew how to help themselves in the use of books. Advanced degrees might be secured more quickly and more efficiently, if our college graduates knew how to use books effectively. Further detail is unnecessary, but into whatever line of activity a man or woman enters, the ability to use books skillfully is the surest means of progressive, up-to-date methods, and the most direct route to success, for through books alone can one come into possession of all that all others know. Books bring to us all the past, and equip us for an intelligent future.

Duty of Librarians to Meet Demand

As Alumni of the University of Washington Library School, we issue this little pamphlet because we believe in the gospel of librarianship, and we consider it not only our privilege, but our duty, to spread this gospel to the young men and women of our state that they may enter, if they like, upon this kind of social service and serve a small portion of the world, and be useful and happy in doing so.

We believe that one way to elevate the profession is by drawing into it those persons who are by nature and education well equipped to help their fellows. As librarians we must also demand and encourage trained workers in our libraries, because we want the best service. We shall be glad to seek out and to try to interest capable people in this line of service.

That these people may be worthy of their hire is our first ambition, and that they be amply paid for their service our second. We must do all that is legitimate to secure fair compensation for good service.

Where Professional Training May be Had

Where shall this professional training be secured? One might infer that our answer to this would be: "At the University of Washington." But not so; our interest is, first, that more competent people be well

trained for this work, just where, is of slight concern. It would be foolish to disclaim a vital interest in our own school, but we readily recognize that for many persons and for many reasons other places are more advantageous than our own school. Even if this were not true, it would be necessary for most to go elsewhere, for our own school is already close to its capacity and we could care for but few more than have been coming to us without urging or inducement.

That all may know where the several library schools are located, that each may choose what will be best suited to his taste and convenience, we append a list of library schools.

List of Library Schools

(*Taken from American Library Annual,* 1917-18)

Library School, Carnegie Library of Atlanta, Atlanta, Ga.

[1]Boston University—College of Business Administration—Course in Library Economy, Boston, Mass.

California State Library School, Sacramento, Calif.

[2]University of Illinois Library School, Urbana, Ill.

University of California Library School, Berkeley, Calif.

Library School of the Los Angeles Public Library, Los Angeles, Calif.

[2]New York State Library School, Albany, N. Y.

Library School of the New York Public Library, New York City.

Pratt Institute School of Library Science, Brooklyn, N. Y.

Carnegie Library School, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Riverside Library Service School, Riverside, Calif.

St. Louis Library School, St. Louis, Mo.

Simmons College School of Library Science, Boston, Mass.

Syracuse University Library School, Syracuse, N. Y.

Western Reserve Library School, Cleveland, Ohio.

University of Washington Library School, Seattle, Wash.

Library School of the University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wis.

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[1]Course offered during 1917-1918, suspended during 1918-1919, because of absence of Director in War Service.

[2]Grant B. L. S. degree, based upon two years' graduate work.

Anderson, Lillian, '16. Librarian, Lincoln High School, Tacoma, Wash.

Arney, Mary, '18. Assistant, Circulation Dept., Tacoma Public Library, Tacoma, Wash.

Ashley, Mabel, '14. Librarian, Everett Public Library, Everett, Wash.

Ballard, Jessie, '13. (Mrs. Peter Mackintosh). Housewife, Yakima, Wash.

Barstad, Verna, '15. (Mrs. Warren Grimm). At Home, Spokane, Wash.

Bateman, Stella, '18. Librarian, Boise High School, Boise, Ida.

Berg, May Alice, '19. Assistant, Circulation Dept., University of Washington Library. Seattle.

Brown, Minnie K. '14. Assistant, Hood River County Library, Hood River, Ore.

Bush, Agnes S., '17. Assistant, Reference Department, Seattle Public Library, Seattle.

Carson, Helen, '14. Librarian, McKinley High School Library, Canton, Ohio.

Carstensen, Harriet L., (Mrs.) '15. Librarian, Whitman College Library, Walla Walla, Wash.

Cleaves, Edith, '18. Assistant, Circulation Dept., Seattle Public Library, Seattle.

Clement, Vera, '18. In business. Seattle.

Coleman, Louise, '18. Assistant, University Branch, Seattle Public Library, Seattle.

Collins, Lillian, '14. Assistant, Reference Dept., Seattle Public Library, Seattle.

Corbitt, Helen, '18. Assistant, Ballard Branch, Seattle Public Library, Seattle.

Cordz, Mamie, '19, At Home, Seattle.

Dallam, Kate, '13. (Mrs. Lair H. Gregory). Assistant, Cataloging Department, Library Association of Portland, Portland, Oregon.

Davis, Ruth, '16. At Home, Tacoma, Wash.

Donley, Helen Irene, '19. Circulation Assistant, Technology Room, Seattle Public Library, Seattle.

Donnell, Georgia M. '17. At Home, Snohomish, Wash.

Drum, Dorothy, '14. (Mrs. Fred G. Wills) Housewife, Walla Walla, Wash.

Eastman, Jessie, '16. Assistant, Lincoln School Library, Teacher's College, New York City.

Erchinger, Hazel, '19. Librarian, Hood River County Library, Hood River, Oregon.

Ferguson, Mary E. '17. Librarian, Engineering Society Library, New York City.

Fisken, Caroline, '14. (Mrs. Louis Kapek) At Home, Spokane, Wash.

Fleming, Esther, '14. Librarian, Branch Library, Library Association of Portland, Portland, Oregon.

Frew, Rosamond, '18. Seattle. Not in library work at present; last position A. L. A. War Service, Brest, France.

Gandolfo, Florence, '15. (Mrs. R. W. Davis.) Assistant, Circulation Department, Seattle Public Library, Seattle.

Gibb, Mary W. '17. Seattle. Not in library work at present; last position A. L. A. Dispatch Office, Newport News, Va.

Giudici, Pauline, '18. (Mrs. Swanson) First Assistant, Reference Dept., Tacoma Public Library, Tacoma, Wash.

Goodwin, Helen Durrie, '19. Assistant, Cataloging Dept. University of Washington Library, Seattle.

Grout, Dorothy, '17. Assistant, Children's Dept., Seattle Public Library, Seattle.

Hammond, Esther, '17. At Home, Enumclaw, Wash.

Hayes, Dorothy, '18. Student, Carnegie Library School, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Hedden, Eleanor, '19. Assistant, Circulation Dept., Seattle Public Library, Seattle.

Henry, Elizabeth, '18. Assistant, University Branch, Seattle Public Library, Seattle.

Hile, Edith, '15. Assistant, Seward Park Branch, New York Public Library, New York City.

Hitchcock, Jeannette, '18. First Assistant, Catalog Dept., Tacoma Public Library, Tacoma, Wash.

Hoit, Doris, '18. Assistant, Circulation Department, Seattle Public Library, Seattle.

Holman, Norma Burnett, '19. At Home, Oregon City, Oregon.

Howe, Ellen Ford, '15 Assistant, Reference Department, and Instructor in Library Economy, University of Washington Library, Seattle.

Hudson, Dorothy Sewall, '19. Assistant, Branch Dept., Seattle Public Library, Seattle.

Johnson, Agnes V. '13. Librarian, Hoquiam Public Library, Hoquiam, Wash.

Jones, Hazel E. '17. Assistant, Circulation Dept., Seattle Public Library, Seattle.

KIRKWOOD, ELIZABETH, '13. Assistant, Periodical Dept., Seattle Public Library, Seattle.

LATHE, HELEN (Mrs. Nathan B. Evans) '16. Assistant, Cataloging Department, Seattle Public Library, Seattle.

LEE, MARIAN WINIFRED, '19. Librarian, South Tacoma Branch, Tacoma Public Library, Tacoma, Wash.

LEWIS, MARION JUNE, '19. Assistant, Circulation Dept., Seattle Public Library, Seattle.

McCUTCHEN, LYDIA, '13. Assistant, Reference Department, University of Washington Library, Seattle.

MARTIN, MARGARET B. '18. Secretary to Librarian, University of Washington Library, Seattle.

MATHIS, FLOY, '19. Assistant, University Branch, Seattle Public Library, Seattle.

MEISSNER, LAURENTINE, '13. Librarian, Columbia Branch, Seattle Public Library, Seattle.

MERCER, BEATRICE, '16. Librarian, Ballard High School, Seattle.

MEREDITH, ROBERTA, '17. U. S. General Hospital No. 43, National Soldiers' Home, Virginia.

MONGERSON, VALEDA, '16. Librarian, Public School Library, and Assistant, Public Library, St. Charles, Ill.

MONK, EDITH, '18. Assistant, Queen Anne Branch, Seattle Public Library, Seattle.

MOODY, MIRIAM, '16. Assistant, Circulation Dept., Seattle Public Library, Seattle.

MORGAN, FLORA, '17. (Mrs. Wm. J. Shaffer) Housewife, Ontario, Oregon.

MOURANT, ETHEL, '14. At Home. Hoquiam, Wash.

NELSON, AGNES ELEANOR, '19. At Home, Bellingham, Wash.

OWEN, ELEANOR, '18, Assistant, Circulation Dept., Seattle Public Library, Seattle.

PINGRY, MADELINE, '15. (Mrs. L. F. Galvin) Housewife, Centralia, Wash.

PINKERTON, HELEN, '13. Librarian in charge Reference Dept., Seward Park Branch, New York Public Library, New York City.

PLIMMER, HILDA, '18. (Mrs. F. Perry Close) Housewife, Hartford, Conn.

REYNOLDS, RUTH, '16. (Mrs. E. E. Severns) Assistant Children's Librarian, Yesler Branch, Seattle Public Library, Seattle.

RICHARDS, JOHN, '16. Student, New York State Library School, Albany, N. Y.

RUTTLE, CORINNE R., '17. Assistant, Public Library, Yakima, Wash.

SCHUMACHER, MARGARET C. '17 Head Circulation Department, University of Washington Library, Seattle.

SEELY, HARRIET, '18, Social Welfare League, Central Bldg., Seattle.

SKEWIS, SHIRLEY MARTIN, '19. Assistant, Circulation Dept., Tacoma Public Library, Tacoma, Wash.

SLEICHER, RUTH, '13. (Mrs. J. E. Smith) Housewife, Chicago, Ill.

SMITH, HARRIETT, '16. (Mrs. Frank S. Buckley) Housewife, Tacoma, Wash.

SMITH, LOUISE, '13. (Mrs. Asa Baldwin) Housewife, Seattle.

SPARKS, BEETHA, '15. Not in library work. Iowa.

STANTON, KATHRYN, '18. (Mrs. E. N. Patty) Housewife, Seattle.

STEINBERGER, LILLIAN, '13. (Mrs. Percival Bates), Deceased.

STEPHENS, ELEANOR, '14. Librarian, Yakima Public Library, Yakima, Wash.

STONE, HELEN, '18. Student, New York State Library School, Albany, N. Y.

THOMAS, GEZINA, '16. (Mrs. E. S. Upper) Housewife, Kasaan, Alaska.

TULLY, IRENE A. '19. Assistant, Circulation Dept., Seattle Public Library, Seattle.

UNGER, NELL A. '19. Librarian, Lincoln High School, Seattle.

WALLACE, EDITH, '18. (Mrs. Hiram Bowen) Housewife, Seattle.

WALSWORTH, ESTHER, '18. (Mrs. C. P. Beezley) Housewife, Seattle.

WOODWORTH, FRANCES M. '17. Assistant, Public Library, Victoria, B. C.

ZINKIE, MARJORIE, '14. Librarian, Raymond Public Library, Raymond, Wash.

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Washington (State) University, Library,
School of Library Economy

BOOKS AND THE IDEAL STATE

ISSUED BY
THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON LIBRARY
SCHOOL

PUBLICATION NO 2

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

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Prefatory Note

It is the intention of the Alumni Association to publish occasional pamphlets on various phases of library work growing out of their experiences. The first one, issued in December, 1919, was entitled "A Call to Librarianship," and the present one is the second of the series.

BOOKS AND THE IDEAL STATE

The text which has furnished the inspiration for this title is to be found in the November issue of "*Public Libraries,*" where this quotation appears: "The ideal State is a Democracy of citizens who read books."

In this period of readjustment following an apparent breakdown of civilization, we as librarians, in common with other individuals and with other institutions, must needs become introspective. Wherein have we contributed towards, or failed to stay this world catastrophe? As we note among the alleged contributing causes, the lack of moral sense in nations, the devitalizing of the religious principle in the church, and the demoralizing of human relationships in the home—we are impelled to add, in the language of our profession—"Into what disuse has fallen the gentle Art of Reading?" Today we are far indeed from that ideal State: a Democracy of citizens who read books.

"But," you say, "have not our schools taught us to read?"

With all due regard for what the schools have done and are doing, they have taught us the use of the implements of reading, but they have not made us a reading nation. The schools are a mighty force in our land for they lay the cornerstone and the foundation for a great Democracy, yet their function must remain largely that of construction—they cannot follow up their work to its completion, for their energies are being continually redirected to new structures which are demanding erection. The schools teach the child to spell and write, but they cannot produce an author—they instruct him in the technique of drawing, but they do not make an artist—they lay the foundation for his musical education, yet he remains but an amateur. All of these arts require specialization for their perfection and so arises the need for our continuation schools. Just beyond the schools then, lies the work of the public library; not to teach nor to develop the processes of thinking, but to give the means of expression, and to direct the understanding. The very complexity of modern life makes for this distinction in the function of institutions.

So with reading, we learn its mechanism in the schools but the art of reading is cultivated in only a few homes and by a few

teachers; it is no conscious part of our educational system. The very nature and intensity of the teacher's training does not encourage the reading habit; aside from professional books and journals, many of them know little of reading as an art, as an intellectual recreation, a means of escape into other worlds than their own. Even when they do, the requirements of the school curriculum, the intricate procedure by means of which the three R's are imparted to the rising generation, makes such a demand upon the teacher's time, that it is only in connection with these processes and not aside from them that she has any opportunity to influence the child.

As for the child, he is so busy in a mighty effort, learning to spell out the words, that his constructive imagination has little chance for free play. In spite of all the supplementary aids there still hangs over him the sense of a "lesson." But when, free from the encompassing school walls, he meets again these identical words on some sign in the street, in a newspaper or book in the home, then it is that the words come to life and thus he embarks upon a wonderful voyage of discovery, and reading becomes an unconscious art.

Reading remains an art and a natural one only so long as we continue upon this wonderful voyage of discovery—it degenerates into a useless pastime when it is sought merely as a means of killing time or when it becomes of such a nature that it clogs the wheels of thought. Like every other wholesome thing it has its excesses. Even when sought as a means of relaxation, of recreation, it must furnish genuine intellectual enjoyment if the mental energies are to be renewed, otherwise it is destructive. This destructive form of reading, whether it be of the newspapers, by means of the printed book or through the films, is affecting every phase of our economic, political and social life of today. It makes not only for slovenly habits of reading, but it generates an inability to think straight or to form a critical, unbiased judgment upon any subject. Evidences of this intellectual breakdown are to be had on every hand. There seems to be no limit to the absurdities that are tolerated in our "movies." What banalities are believed when vouched for as spiritual guidance, simply because they quote, or misquote, the Scriptures or philosophers! Perverted truths, distorted facts and outright falsehoods are spread broadcast because people cannot resist the conviction which is effected by means of the printed word.

The cultivation of the Reading Art exercises the faculty for investigation—it develops a discriminating sense of values and makes for sane and balanced minds. Our borrower who tells us

that after all it is just a matter of opinion whether an author's books are good or bad, is a long way from the truth. It is *not* a matter of opinion, it is a matter of intelligence. Books either *do* or they *do not* make for sane thinking, and it seriously concerns us, as librarians, that we look more carefully into our books. The printed page is the only source which many of us have for much of our experience—therefore the experiences portrayed therein must be genuine and presented accurately if they are to do us no harm.

Children are safeguarded as to their mental and physical health in the home and in the school, and as a surety for their moral guidance we add the church. But with all these props removed where will they stand? They are but half educated until they can make use of that faculty by means of which they are able to distinguish good from evil, truth from fiction, and reality from sham. Unable to think for themselves or to judge clearly, they are but swaying reeds tossed hither and thither on the mental and spiritual winds of the world. As "Henry Sidgwick: a memoir" puts it—

"We think so, because other people all think so;
Or because—or because after all we do think so;
Or because we are told so, and think we must think so;
Or because we once thought so and think we still think so;
Or because having thought so, we think we *will* think so."

In the child's early years, the faculty which is most strongly developed is the imagination—this is the medium through which he must explore the world. Facts are stubborn things to be approached gradually, while Reality is a terrible monster into whose presence it is nothing short of cruelty to force the child without this protective veil of illusion. Yet many parents demand that their children stick strictly to their texts and be denied all imaginative literature, fables, fairy tales, and even fiction, on the ground that they are "tired of having them read such lies." But the child lives in just such a world of lies, and a wonderful world it is—a world out of which are born arts, poetry and literature. The fairy tale conjures up in the youthful mind shapes, forms and colors which harmonize and blend for him into a sense of beauty. How dreary often is the environment of childhood and with what ruthlessness is he denied the very means of expression which his awakening consciousness demands.

Any normal craving requires satisfaction. If the fare upon which it feeds be wholesome there is growth, but if adulterated,

either the craving continues, demanding an immoderate amount of the same adulterated food or the natural sense of taste dies away altogether. As with the craving for physical nourishment, so with the mental and spiritual appetites, these may become distorted out of all semblance to their normal selves by what they feed upon. The infantine mental diet must not continue too long but through all the years proper intellectual stimuli, which make for the strength and vigor of the mind and not for its enfeeblement, must be provided. Many men and women of today, especially women, still continue, so far as their reading is concerned, upon a diet of milk and mush. Until our mental bill of fare becomes a better balanced ration, the standard of intelligence, even though it be raised to that of the eighth grade, cannot be long maintained.

The conception which one mother gave of her daughter upon her graduation from high school, when she said "Now, she's a finished young lady," may have been near the truth. On the other hand we have this picture: a young man just finishing college comes to the library and says, "I'm about to leave school. I have been studying some English, some history, a little education, some economics, and so on—but I have had little time for reading except here and there. What are some of the best authors and what are the best books along different lines which I ought to know and should read?" This is the spirit which is going forth to conquer the world, even the one in which he lives. The personal contacts, social, intellectual, moral and spiritual which are needed for a well-rounded development are not to be had in most environments. If we can in any way furnish these contacts and establish a wider acquaintance and familiarity with the best teachers of all times and on all subjects, through access to books; if we can do this we are not therefore either missionaries or social workers, we are simply accepting that share of responsibility towards our neighbors which belongs to each of us.

School systems may rise and fall, yet we cannot stifle the fundamental need for true teachers to direct the course of education and of growth. In spite of the destruction of creeds, a sense of Divine Responsibility, the Spirit of God, still persists in the human soul. We need not fear for the downfall of the family which is bound together by ties of mutual need, respect and affection. As with individuals so with nations, and as the family so the relationship between nations—all our institutions will withstand every hostile force from without until we begin to tolerate their desecration from within.

We are all quite ready to agree as to certain of these fundamental principles but we are selfish in the application of them. We are selfish as individuals, as members of families, as social groups and as peoples, and this is said without meaning in any way that we are to sacrifice ourselves either individually or collectively for the advancement of others. Such sacrifice is, after all, nothing more than the indulgence of other people's selfishness. But as individuals, there is no right by which we can demand without giving in return; as a class or social group we have no claim to control which is to be exercised without equal justice to all; and as a people our progress must be in line with and not opposed to progress elsewhere, nor injustice must progress elsewhere be at our expense. Relationships, whether between individuals or groups of individuals which leave human life, human capabilities and human happiness at the mercy of the selfish, the vicious or the ignorant, should not be allowed to endure. Only through a normal all-round development can any of us hope to work out an ultimate destiny and whatsoever hinders in that achievement adds to the sum total of wasted human life.

Much of the tragedy of life, if not most of it, is due to the fact that the process of education stops when it arrives at a sense of detail and of facts, but before it has attained a corresponding sense of imagination with which to interpret these facts. There are many indications that the public conscience is awake or is being awakened today as never before, and many are seeking to evade it. This is one reason why so large a number of people persist in reading only those books which help them to ignore their responsibilities. Unpleasant truths are always evaded so long as there is no imaginative understanding with which to combat them. In this age when the most normal mind is at times forced to search out its way, what a menace is this indifference in which thought is suspended.

The Renaissance of Reading as conceived by the American Library Association is indeed no empty phrase, but like the great idea of abolishing war, it cannot be suddenly grafted, once and for all, single-handed, from without—it must spring from seeds which take root in the home soil. If we are not to witness the downfall of the church, the school and the home, as we have witnessed the downfall of nations and of world relationships, we must aid in the remodelling of these institutions upon indestructible foundations. In our dismay at the destruction of our old fortifications and the

crumbling even of the new, let us not lose sight of the fact that this is not so much due to the pressure of diabolical forces from without against which we are powerless, as it is due to the presence of disintegration within—to the decay of unsound materials with which we have builded.

How are we who regard our Reading Art seriously to avoid supplying these reading opiates, which allay thinking and in the final analysis destroy it? This is the problem which our libraries and our library boards must face, if we are to foster a discriminating reading sense and so defeat the publisher's advertisements, the shop window displays and the movie reels, which are the creators of the popular demand. It is not so much the fact that these books are as signboard painting when compared with the genuine art of literature, nor their crudeness of plot, which is often well sustained, which offends—as it is that they are the work of men and women of mediocre minds from whom the public unconsciously absorbs its psychology, philosophy and its mental attitude toward life. As a mild example, take this scene from a best-seller of this type which has been popular now for several years.*

In this particular instance the story is quite absorbing in its interest, and the local atmosphere is well reproduced. Still it is typical of the usual pot-boiler whose author is widely proclaimed as the "greatest living American novelist." Take note of his power of delineating character, his insight, the reasonableness of the psychology, and the refinement of the language!

The heroine who has lived on the outskirts of civilization all her conscious life suddenly comes into possession of an evening gown with all its accessories. She has always felt, the author tells us, "instinctively, that she belongs to the world of fine ladies in her picture books. How odd it was, now that she considered it, that she needed no aid with these alien garments, that she knew" (here again) "instinctively their every feature, that there was no intricacy to cause her more than an instant's trouble." She hears someone at the door and giving us an opportunity to note with what grace she affects these garments, the author continues "She kicked the train into place behind her, looped the shawl carelessly about her in a way to veil her modesty effectively, and swept out into the big room." Naturally she meets with a surprise as she finds herself face to face with a man whom she has seen but once before, but whom the reader has recognized at that first meeting as the man provided. Where-

*Rex Beach "The barrier".

upon—again the author—"she utters a little strangled cry" while he "staring at her fervently, ejaculates 'Great lovely dove!'" The third meeting precipitates them into each other's arms, as is common in all books of this class.

The mere presence of women in these best sellers seems to make for insipidness of conversation and of action. Yet worse than insipid are many of these books in which all standards of good taste are violated, yet are glossed over and made to appear as something rather fine, while actions of genuine immorality are conventionalized into emotions and relations which we are to consider as sacred. We have laws to protect us against criminals in society, against adulterations in our food and drugs and to some extent in what we wear—but there is no protection against what may be offered to the mind. How we librarians should delight in labelling our stock "Western melodrama (50% adulterated sex)"; "Sweet stories (100% pure sugar)" and so on.

However, the prevailing form of immorality in books is by no means that of sex. Anything which is presented as truth, as goodness, as nobility, as reverence or what not, without having any of the attributes thereof—is immoral—regardless of the author's motives or beliefs. It is a menace to human progress that uncritical readers are not protected from the leadership of men and women who are but half-educated, yet without any modesty as to their limitations, and wholly opinionated. Few questions evade the easy pen of these popular prophets, whether they lie within the sphere of economics, philosophy, or religion; yet how seldom are they treated with any degree of sanity. The same author, in a story called "Man proposes—" presents the theme that "no man dies until his time arrives," in a manner which well illustrates this.

Just such stories are the kind recommended by many who feel that because they follow the language, and purport to follow the teachings of established conventions and beliefs, they are safe, disregarding how false or superficial their contribution to the subject may be or to what muddled reasoning it may lead.

On the other hand, books which deal honestly and sincerely with life are proclaimed as immoral and looked upon with horror because they paint crime as red and sin as black—for above all else we must have nothing unpleasant. All unpleasantness must be shunned as the plague, however inevitable its approach. In order to remain sinless, we must remain in ignorance of sin—but herein lies the fallacy: there still remains open and unprotected one point of contact—that

of experience. Is it not much more to be desired that our boys and our girls gain through a vicarious reading experience knowledge of truths which are dealt with delicately so that innocence is not offended, yet remorselessly so that ignorance is dispelled, rather than that they be forced to learn by means of some experience which shall make life for them a tragedy? How much *less* unpleasant it is to make the acquaintance in a book of a man who is an actual cad or of a woman who is a genuine fiend, than it is to come up against them in real life. Even taking a chance that there are to be no unpleasant experiences in our own lives, just so long as it remains a fact that not all men are honest and trustworthy, nor are all women sweet and pure-minded, just so long are victims going to be offered up in sacrifice—unless they be safeguarded by a sense of understanding which will recognize the presence of evil in whatsoever form it may exist and so rob it of its power to harm.

The Yale University Press recently quoted the following "The fortunate people—the truly fortunate, are not so much those who succeed in life as those who succeed in living. To achieve that is an art worth cultivating; in one's reading and thinking only the best contributes to it." Human life is but wasted when its responsibilities are evaded. Our public and private questions of today are not going to solve themselves. Either they are going to remain unsolved or they are going to follow the course marked out for them by the pressure of public opinion, which may mean the same thing—no solution, unless public opinion be enlightened so that it works without recourse to personal, political, religious or social emotion, prejudice or bias.

The path of approach to our social problems in which the public library is to play its great part must begin at home. Probably no other institution in a community so realizes its inadequacy as does the public library. However, I do not believe that the limited number of these institutions and their meagerness of equipment is due to any real opposition to the library idea, but rather to a wide-spread lack of knowledge as to its nature; and just so soon as this ignorance is removed will its path of destiny be made clear. Needs do not necessarily bring a recognition of their remedies, for recognition comes only through knowledge. People have not in general come to use our public libraries enough, or have not used the right kind of libraries enough to recognize that they are no longer mere luxurious establishments or monuments to which the public can point with civic pride, but are living forces as vital to enlightened civilization as fresh air is to the sick room.

The library whose chief source of supply is the ancient volumes which have cumbered our homes, is becoming an anachronism. Even our larger libraries are beginning to realize the uselessness of much of this dead timber upon their shelves, and so every progressive step taken makes for the greater usefulness of the library and for larger demands upon its resources. Only in proportion as we become vigorous are we recognized as essential and our existence justified.

In any case our course is forward, for we feel that it is a matter of the gravest responsibility not only to those who exercise control over, but to those of us who have come to dwell within the Intellectual Halls of our communities that these should become the great centers of sanity, as far-reaching in their creative effectiveness, and as refreshing, as springs of clear water whose sources are to be kept perennially pure and free.

(Presidential address before the Puget Sound Library Club, by Mabel Ashley, '14. Everett, Washington, December 29, 1920.)

Anderson, Lillian, '16. Librarian, Lincoln High School, Tacoma, Wash.
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Bateman, Stella, '18. Assistant, Yesler Branch Library, Seattle.
Berg, May Alice, '19. Assistant, Branch Dept. Library Association of Portland, Portland, Ore.
Bergoust, Charlotte, '20. Assistant, Circulation Dept. Tacoma Public Library, Tacoma, Wash.
Brown, Minnie K. '14. Acting Librarian, Hood River County Library, Hood River, Ore.
Bush, Agnes S. '17. Assistant, Reference Dept. Seattle Public Library, Seattle.

Carson, Helen, '14. Librarian, McKinley High School Library, Canton, Ohio.
Carstensen, Harriet L. (Mrs.) '15. Librarian, Whitman College Library, Walla, Walla, Wash.
Cleaves, Edith, '18. Assistant, Circulation Dept. Seattle Public Library, Seattle.
Clement, Vera, '18. In business, Seattle.
Coleman, Louise, '18. Assistant, University Branch Library, Seattle.
Collins, Lillian, '14. Assistant, Reference Dept. Seattle Public Library, Seattle.
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Lewis, Marion June, '19. (Mrs. Lyman Black). Housewife, Seattle
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Mongerson, Valeda, '16. Deceased.
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Platt, Gladys, '20. Assistant, University of Oregon, Eugene, Ore.
Plimmer, Hilda, '18. (Mrs. F. Perry Close). Executive Secretary, Juvenile Commission, Hartford, Conn.

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Sleicher, Ruth, '13. (Mrs. J. E. Smith). Housewife, Chicago, Ill.
Smith, Harriett, '16. (Mrs. Frank S. Buckley). Housewife, Tacoma, Wash.
Smith, Louise, '13. (Mrs. Asa Baldwin). Housewife, Seattle.
Sparks, Bertha, '15. Not in library work. Iowa.
Stanton, Kathryn, '18. (Mrs. E. N. Patty). Housewife, Seattle.
Steinberger, Lillian, '13. (Mrs. Percival Bates). Deceased.

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